
Graduation Rate Technical Manual



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Revisions in this Edition

This manual is revised from that issued in October, 2008, to incorporate the non-regulatory guidance to high school graduations rates released by the United States Department of Education on December 22, 2008. The new guidance required only the removal of two groups of students from the Exited Students list for cohorts, those students withdrawn due to chronic illness and those who were transferred to a state detention or correctional facility where they are receiving educational services.

The method used to calculate the graduation rates not only conforms to the 2008 non-regulatory guidance but also to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data.

1 Introduction

Overview

This document serves as an overview of the processes currently in place for computing both the four and five year graduation rates for schools, districts and the state. The data source for these calculations changed with the cohort class of 2005. This was the first cohort whose graduation rates were calculated using individual student information submitted by schools to the department's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS).

Background

The graduation rate is computed for every public high school and district with a public high school in Arizona. Rates are also computed and published for the state as a whole. The purpose of the graduation rate is to measure the progress of Arizona high school students. It focuses on the positive aspects of completion: those students that graduate on time (within four years) and those who take an extra year (within five years). Graduation rates are used in both Arizona's AZ LEARNS accountability evaluations and, the federal, No Child Left Behind Annual Yearly Progress determinations.

The graduation rate is the percentage of students in a given cohort who graduate within four or five years. A cohort year is based on a standard four year high school career beginning with a student's first time enrollment in the ninth grade. Cohort class membership is formally defined in chapter 2.

Exit or year-end codes submitted to SAIS by the schools are used to determine the status of each student. It is imperative that schools and districts understand this importance and endeavor to insure that the data they submit is as accurate as possible. To that end, detailed descriptions of the codes and types of students they should be used for are included within this document.

2 Cohort Membership

Overview

Membership in a cohort class is established at the time of the student's first enrollment, with integrity, in the SAIS system in a high school grade. It is computed on the typical four year expectation for graduation based on the high school grade in which the student is first enrolled. The student's identity with the cohort class remains the same, regardless of student transfers, credits earned, time spent out of Arizona, time spent out of school, and the time necessary for the student to complete requirements for graduation.

Cohort Class Determination

A student's cohort is determined by the first time she is enrolled in a high school grade in SAIS. For example, a student was considered members of the cohort of 2007 if:

1. The student enrolled as a 9th grader or Ungraded Secondary (US) for the first time in the 2004 school year.
2. The student enrolled as a 10th grader in the 2005 school year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).
3. The student enrolled as an 11th grader in the 2006 school year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).
4. The student enrolled as a 12th grader in the 2007 school year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).

Cohort Class Membership

Students are maintained in the cohort for their last high school of record unless they have exited due to illness; transferred to a school that is not an Arizona public school; have left to be home schooled; transferred to a correctional or detention facility; or are deceased. These students should have exit codes of W1, W2, W6, W8, W9, W10, S1, S99, S2, S6, S8, S9, or S10. See the code listings for complete descriptions.

For the five-year graduation rate, students who take the extra year to graduate are attributed to their last school of record, even if that is different than their four-year high school. However, if they do not graduate in that ensuing year, their membership remains with their four-year high school. This process encourages schools to take on fifth-year seniors and attempt to help them graduate.

3 Exit and Year-End Codes

Students within a cohort are assigned to one of three categories based on their last exit or year-end code in SAIS following the end of their cohort year.

- Students who have graduated (Graduates)
- Students who remain in the cohort but have not graduated (Non-graduates)
- Students who have exited the cohort (Exited Students)

The exit and year-end codes for each of these categories are detailed in the next section. The codes used are consistent across both the four-year and five-year graduation rates.

Exit and Year-End Code Options

The following sections provide detailed descriptions of these outcomes. Each student may only have one outcome.

Graduates

Year-end: G

Withdrawal: W7

Summer withdrawal: S7

Graduates are students who have met one of the following requirements to receive a high school diploma:

- Completed a course of study for high school, AND
- Passed all three high school AIMS assessments with or without augmentation;

OR

- Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP), AND
- Fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Students are considered as graduating on time for the four-year graduation rate if they graduate any time prior to September 1st of the following school year. Students are considered as graduating on time for the five-year rate if they graduate by June 30th of the fiscal year following their cohort year. Participation in graduation ceremonies and other activities for seniors is a matter of school policy.

Non-Graduates

Following are the codes for students who are considered as non-graduates.

Attendees Year-end: A

Attendees are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Did NOT fulfill a course of study whether or not they received passing scores on all of the AIMS tests.
- Did NOT complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP) whether or not they fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.
- Turned 22 years of age.
- Attended school as a twelfth grade foreign exchange student (used only in grades 11 or 12).

Attendees have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll. If a student has turned 22 years of age and is withdrawn with either an W6 or S6 code (Aged Out), then they are consider to have exited the cohort.

Completers Year-end: C Withdrawal: W13 Summer withdrawal: S13

Completers are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests, either with or without augmentation.
- Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Completers have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll.

Promoted Year-end: P

This code is used for students who were promoted to the next grade (used in all grade levels except for grade 12).

Retained Year-end: R

This code is used for students who were retained in the same grade.

Still Enrolled (AIMS)
Year-end: SA

Students still enrolled (AIMS) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to continue to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive a passing score on one or more of the AIMS tests
- Completed a course of study but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Still Enrolled (Course of Study)
Year-end: SC

Students still enrolled (course of study) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- DID NOT fulfill a course of study but DID receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests
- DID NOT complete a course of study but DID fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Still Enrolled (Met No Requirement)
Year-end: SE

Students still enrolled (met no requirement) are students who will be enrolled in school for an additional year of high school to continue to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- DID NOT fulfill a course of study and DID NOT receive a passing score on the AIMS test
- DID NOT complete a course of study and DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Illness
Withdrawal: W2
Summer withdrawal: S2

This code is used for students who withdraw due to chronic illness. (Withdrawal may not be required. Please refer to the district's chronic illness policy.)

Expelled
Withdrawal: W3
Summer withdrawal: S3

This code is used to withdraw students for expulsion or long term suspension prior to the end of the school year or summer term. The students will not be returning to school.

Status Unknown**Withdrawal: W4****Summer withdrawal: S4**

Status unknown students are students who have more than ten consecutive days of unexcused absences, and whose status is unknown to the school. Attempts should be made to find out what has happened to these students so that other more appropriate codes can be applied. Use the S4 code for students who were enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school. The effective date of withdrawal is the last day of actual attendance.

Dropout**Withdrawal: W5****Summer withdrawal: S5**

Dropouts are students who leave school with the intention of NOT completing the necessary requirements for a high school diploma. The school has confirmed the dropout status by verbal notification or other acceptable method.

This code should be used for students who have intentionally dropped out of school, except for the following reasons:

- Chronic illness
- To receive a GED certificate
- Transfer to a juvenile correctional facility

Detention**Withdrawal: W10****Summer withdrawal: S10**

The detention code is used to withdraw students who have been transferred to a state detention or correctional facility where they are receiving educational services. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply this code.

GED**Withdrawal: W11****Summer withdrawal: S11**

General Educational Development (GED) students are students who withdraw from school expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED. Students of high school age must withdraw to take the GED test. Verbal notification at the time of withdrawal is sufficient to apply these codes.

Vocational School**Withdrawal: W12****Summer withdrawal: S12**

This code is used for students who leave school to continue studies at a technical or vocational school. This includes ALL schools or educational programs that DO NOT meet Arizona requirements for obtaining a high school diploma. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply these codes.

Exited Students

Transferred

Withdrawal: W1

Summer withdrawal:

S1 (out of district) or

S99 (within district)

There are multiple codes for students who are considered having exited the cohort.

This code is used for students who withdraw to continue their studies in another school, public or private, which grants an accredited high school diploma. This code also applies to students who have been accepted into an early admission college program so long as they are attending college full-time and working toward an Arizona high school diploma.

An Official Notice of Pupil Withdrawal form must be completed for students who withdraw. In general, documentation of transfer to another school (W1 or S1) consists of one of the following:

- Request from another school for transcript or student records
- Information from a responsible adult that the student is enrolled elsewhere.

A request from another school for transcript or other official school records will suffice to verify that a student has transferred to another school. The student's record should indicate the date the transcript request was received, along with the name and address of the school to which the student has transferred.

Arizona law requires Arizona schools to request school records quickly and exercise diligence in obtaining those records. "Within five school days after enrolling a transfer pupil from a private school or another school district, a school shall request directly from the pupil's previous school a certified copy of his record. The requesting school shall exercise due diligence in obtaining the copy of the record requested." (ARS § 15-828 F)

After transmittal of the records, it is not necessary to verify actual enrollment in the new school or to follow up with the student any further.

In the absence of a transcript request, notification by a responsible adult is acceptable evidence of transfer if it confirms actual enrollment in another school and not just the intent to enroll.

"Responsible adult" is not limited to immediate family; the definition includes a school official, faculty member, or other adult with responsibility for the student (e.g., truant officer, medical doctor, corrections official, etc.).

Schools should attempt to get written notification if possible. Verbal notification should be documented in the student record in the same manner as a request for transcript.

Aged Out**Withdrawal: W6****Summer withdrawal: S6**

This code is used to withdraw students who are no longer of school age (22 years).

Deceased**Withdrawal: W8****Summer withdrawal: S8**

This code is used to withdraw students who have died while enrolled in the school.

Home Taught**Withdrawal: W9****Summer withdrawal: S9**

This code is used for students who withdraw to be taught at home. A.R.S. § 15-802(B)(3) allows a student to be taught at home after certain requirements are met. The parent must file an affidavit with the county school superintendent that the child is attending a regularly organized private or home school. However, to document a withdrawal to be home taught (W9 or S9), a record of verification from the county school superintendent that the parent has filed the affidavit is NOT required. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply this code.

**Not Affecting
Classification**

There are two exit codes for students who transfer within programs (grades) within their school. Since these codes are to be used in concert with enrollment codes into the new program within the school, these codes are NOT used to determine the classification status of the student.

**Transferred Grade
Withdrawal: WT**

This code is used to transfer students to another grade within the school. If a student is promoted or demoted to another grade within the same school, use the WT withdrawal code to withdraw the student from the grade he or she was enrolled in.

**Transferred Register
Withdrawal: WR**

This code is used to transfer students to another register within the same grade and school.

4 Graduation Rate Calculation

Calculation Formula

When the graduation rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to place students in the cohort into one of the three categories (graduate, non-graduate, and exited the cohort). Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation. Those students within the exited cohort category are excluded from further analysis.

To compute each graduation rate the following formula is used:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Graduates}}{\text{Number of Graduates} + \text{Number of Non - Graduates}}$$

Because the graduation rate is a cohort measure, schools should be especially aware that:

1. A school is responsible for students in the non-graduate category as defined above EVEN if the students were not enrolled in that school for their cohort year (e.g. school year 2005-2006 for cohort 2006).
2. A student may be a member of a cohort because of an enrollment in the ninth grade in another school regardless of when the student was considered a ninth grade student in their current school.